

“O’NEALS” OFF TO A BAD START

Bill Donohue comments on “The Real O’Neals” poor ratings:

Four episodes into its second season, Disney/ABC’s “The Real O’Neals” continues its dismal performance in the ratings.

Tuesday night’s audience of 2.78 million was its lowest yet for the new season. Each week it has lagged behind the ratings of its competing shows on CBS and NBC. More significantly, it is losing an average of close to one million viewers per week from “Fresh Off the Boat,” the show that immediately precedes it on ABC.

This is the same ratings pattern that afflicted “O’Neals” in its first season: lagging behind its competition on the other networks, and losing viewership from ABC’s preceding program.

Perhaps its ratings aren’t improving because its scripts aren’t improving, as Tuesday night’s episode demonstrated. It featured a bumbling, confused priest who had married the parents years earlier even though he had “never seen two young people so not in love.” He then gave them terrible counseling when their marriage was in trouble, and reacts to news of their divorce by shrugging, “Oh well. I tried.” But all ends happily, with a family “divorce ceremony,” mom in her wedding dress and son Kenny presiding, bible in hand.

Is it any wonder that this show—inspired by anti-Catholic bigot Dan Savage—cannot gain any traction in the ratings? Its juvenile humor and shallow mockery of Catholicism are not working.

Contact Disney-ABC chief: ben.sherwood@abc.com